

January 7, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket No. 09-191

January 7, 2010

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

At CommonHealth ACTION ([www.commonhealthaction.org](http://www.commonhealthaction.org)) we work with communities, organizations, all levels of government, and public health entities to create equal opportunities for all Americans to be healthy. To do this, we recognize that we must address structural and social factors that produce health outcomes. These factors include but are not limited to employment, education, healthcare, access to technology, housing, transportation, and other essential services. We are concerned about increasing disparities in health and well-being and we seek to turn the tide. Overall, social and economic disparities have increased dramatically in the last 25 years, and correlate with increasing health disparities and shorter life expectancy rates. The proportion of the U.S. population lacking health insurance continues to increase and more than half (56%) of the uninsured population is characterized as low income.

Community advocates and public leaders are hungry for solutions to the nation's health challenges. CommonHealth ACTION works with them to generate and implement those solutions. From our perspective, the Internet has emerged as the crucial tool needed to bring affordable access to health care and effective disease management to those most in need. That is why America must speed its deployment of high-speed Internet systems. For many Americans, a broadband connection is a link to entertainment or education but for individuals without access to healthcare, a high-speed connection is increasingly the best option for their health to be monitored and rapid diagnoses to be made.

We applaud all five commissioners for speaking out about the benefits of broadband and specifically its potential impact on healthcare but we are increasingly concerned about the impact Net neutrality could have on the deployment of the advanced new systems necessary for improved healthcare. Specifically, while many Americans enjoy a choice of high-speed access options, millions have no access. These Americans disproportionately live in poor and isolated areas – the poorest parts of our cities and isolated rural communities.



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Fulfilling the Obama Administration's goal of broadband for all Americans will require time and massive investment. Against this reality, Net neutrality could slow this process as lawyers and regulators debate changing technological details.

We urge the Commission to appreciate the unique demands that "remote healthcare" place on a network. Real-time remote diagnosis is a cost-effective tool for a growing number of patients who find regular doctor visits impractical, inaccessible, or too costly. To be effective, telehealth and telemedicine require communication uninterrupted by sudden spikes in traffic. Net neutrality's premise that "all data are equal" on the Web would directly impact the ability to set up the kind of instant, uninterrupted communication necessary for online healthcare and disease management to grow and improve.

As the new home of the Institute for Public Health Innovation, CommonHealth ACTION salutes the Commission's emphasis on broadband access for all Americans. You deserve strong support for your commitment to one of the Obama Administration's most important goals. Please consider the implications of any new regulations that would delay the achievement of this goal. Broadband access is critical to eliminating health disparities, increasing healthcare access, and improving health outcomes for all Americans.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.

Yours in health,

Natalie S. Burke  
Principal  
CommonHealth ACTION